

Confreded alle by bonde of Crueltee,
And been assented that I shal be sleyn.
And I have put my compleynt up ageyn;
for to my foos my bille I dar not shewe,
Theffect of which seith thus, in wordes fewe:

The Bille.

HUMBLEST of herte, hiest
of reverence,
Benigne flour, coroune of
vertues alle,
Sheweth unto your rial
excellence
Your servaunt, if I durste
me so calle,
His mortal harm, in which he
is yfalle,
And noght al only for his evel fare,
But for your renoun, as he shal declare.

Hit stondeth thus: your contraire, Crueltee,
Allyed is ageynst your regalye
Under colour of womanly Beautee,
for men ne shuld not knowe hir tyrannye,
With Bountee, Gentillesse, and Curtesye,
And hath depryved you now of your place
That hight Beautee, apertenant to Grace.

for kyndly, by your heritage right,
Ye been annexed ever unto Bountee;
And verayly ye oughte do your might
To helpe Trouthe in his adversitee.
Ye been also the coroune of Beautee;
And certes, if ye wanten in thise tweyne,
The world is lore; ther nis no more to seyne.

¶ Eek what availeth Maner and Gentillesse
Withoute you, benigne creature?
Shal Crueltee be your governeresse?
Alas! what herte may hit longe endure?
Wherfor, but ye the rather take cure
To breke that perilous alliaunce,
Ye sleen hem that ben in your obeisaunce.

And further over, if ye suffre this,
Your renoun is fordo than in a throwe;
Ther shal no man wite wel what Pite is.
Alas! that your renoun shul be so lowe!
Ye be than fro your heritage ythrowe
By Crueltee, that occupieth your place;
And we despaired, that seken to your grace.

Have mercy on me, thou Herenus quene,
That you have sought so tenderly and yore;
Let som streem of your light on me be sene
That love and drede you, ay lenger the more.
for, sothly for to seyne, I bere the sore,
And, though I be not cunning for to pleyne,
for Goddes love, have mercy on my peyne!

¶ My peyne is this, that whatso I desire
That have I not, ne nothing lyk therto;
And ever set Desire myn herte on fire;

Eek on that other syde, wherso I go,
What maner thing that may encrese wo
That have I redy, unsoght, everywhere;
Me ne lakketh but my deth, and than my bere.

What nedeth to shewe parcel of my peyne?
Sith every wo that herte may bethinke
I suffre, and yet I dar not to you pleyne;
for wel I woot, although I wake or winke,
Ye rekke not whether I flete or sinke.
But natheles, my trouthe I shal sustene
Unto my deth, and that shal wel be sene.

This is to seyne, I wol be youres ever;
Though ye me slee by Crueltee, your fo,
Algate my spirit shal never dissever
fro your servyse, for any peyne or wo.
Sith ye be deed, alas! that hit is so!
Thus for your deth I may wel wepe and pleyne
With herte sore and ful of besy peyne.
Here endeth the exclamacion of the Deth of Pite.

THE COMPLEYNT OF MARS.

The Proem.

LADETH, ye foules, of the
morow gray,
Lo! Venus risen among yow
rowes rede!
And floures fresshe, hon-
oureth ye this day;
for when the sonne uprist,
then wol ye sprede.
But ye lovers, that lye in any
drede,
fleeth, lest wikked tonges yow espye;
Lo! yond the sonne, the candel of jelosye!

With teres blewe, and with a wounded herte
Taketh your leve; and, with seynt John to
borow,
Apeseth somewhat of your sorowes smerte,
Tyme cometh eft, that cese shal your sorow;
The glade night is worth an hevy morow!
(Seynt Valentyne! a foul thus herde I singe
Upon thy day, er sonne gan upspringe).

Yet sang this foul: I rede yow al awake,
And ye, that han not chosen in humble wyse,
Without repenting cheseth yow your make.
And ye, that han ful chosen as I devyse,
Yet at the leste renoveleth your servyse;
Confermeth it perpetuely to dure,
And patiently taketh your aventure.

And for the worship of this hye feste,
Yet wol I, in my briddes wyse, singe
The sentence of the compleynt, at the leste,
That woful Mars made atte departinge
fro fresshe Venus in a morweninge,
Whan Phebus, with his fyry torches rede,
Ransaked every lover in his drede.

MYLOM the thriddle
hevenes lord above,
As wel by hevenish
revolucion
As by desert, hath wonne
Venus his love,
And she hath take him in
subjeccioun,
And as a maistresse
taught him his lessoun,
Comaunding him that never, in hir servyse,
he nere so bold no lover to despysse.

for she forbad him jelosye at alle,
And cruelte, and boost, and tyrannye;
She made him at hir lust so humble and talle,
That when hir deynd caste on hym her ye
he took in pacience to live or dye;
And thus she brydeleth him in hir manere,
With nothing but with scourging of hir chere.

Who regneth now in blisse, but Venus,
That hath this worthy knight in governaunce?
Who singeth now but Mars, that serveth thus
The faire Venus, causer of plesaunce?
He bynt him to perpetual obeisaunce,
And she bynt hir to loven him for ever,
But so be that his trespass hit dissever.

Thus be they knit, and regnen as in heven
By lokyn most; til hit fil, on a tyde,
That by hir bothe assent was set a steven,
That Mars shal entre, as faste as he may glyde,
Into hir nexte paleys, to abyde,
Walking his cours til she had him atake,
And he preyde hir to haste hir for his sake.

Then seyde he thus: Myn hertes lady swete,
Ye knowe wel my mischef in that place;
for slykely, til that I with yow mete,
My lyf stant ther in aventure and grace;
But when I see the beaute of your face,
Ther is no drede of deth may do me smerte,
for al your lust is ese to myn herte.

¶ She hath so gret compassion of hir knight,
That dwelleth in solitude til she come;
for hit stood so, that ilke tyme, no wight
Counsayled him, ne seyde to him welcome,
That nigh hir wit for wo was overcome;
Wherfore she spedde hir as faste in hir weye,
Almost in oon day, as he hide in tweye.

The grette joye that was bitwix hem two,
Whan they be met, ther may no tunge telle,
Ther is no more, but unto bed they go,
And thus in joye and blisse I lete hem dwelle;
This worthy Mars, that is of knightthod welle,
The flour of fairnes lappeth in his armes,
And Venus kisseth Mars, the god of armes.

Sojourned hath this Mars, of which I rede,
In chambre amid the paleys prively

A certeyn tyme, til him fel a drede,
Through Phebus, that was comen hastily
Within the paleys yates sturdely,
With torches in honde, of which the stremes
bryght
On Venus chambre knockeden ful lighte.

The chambre, ther as lay this fresshe quene,
Depeynted was with whyte boles grete,
And by the light she knew, that shoon so shene,
That Phebus cam to brenne hem with his hete;
This sely Venus, dreyn in teres wete,
Enbraceth Mars, and seyde, Alas! I dye!
The torch is come, that al this world wol wrye.

¶ Up sterte Mars, him liste not to slepe,
Whan he his lady herde so compleyne;
But, for his nature was not for to wepe,
Insteade of teres, fro his eyen tweyne
The fyry sparkes brosten out for peyne;
And hente his hauberk, that lay him besyde;
flee wolde he not, ne mighte himselven hyde.

He throweth on his helm of huge wighte,
And girt him with his swerde; and in his honde
his mighty spere, as he was wont to fighte,
He shaketh so that almost it towonde;
ful hevy he was to walken over londe;
He may not holde with Venus companye,
But bad hir flee, lest Phebus hir espye.

O woful Mars! alas! what mayst thou seyn,
That in the paleys of thy disturbaunce
Art left behinde, in peril to be sleyn?
And yet therto is double thy penaunce,
for she, that hath thyn herte in governaunce,
Is passed halfe the stremes of thyn yen;
That thou nere swift, wel mayst thou wepe
and cryen.

Now fleeth Venus unto Cylenius tour,
With voide cours, for fere of Phebus light.
Alas! and ther ne hath she no socour,
for she ne fond ne saw no maner wight;
And eek as ther she had but litil might;
Wherfor, hirselves for to hyde and save,
Within the gate she fledde into a cave.

Derk was this cave, and smoking as the helle,
Not but two pas within the gate hit stood;
A naturel day in derk I lete hir dwelle.
Now wol I speke of Mars, furious and wood;
for sorow he wolde have seen his herte blood;
Sith that he mighte hir don no companye,
He ne roghte not a myte for to dye.

So feble he wex, for hete and for his wo,
That nigh he swelt, he mighte unnethe endure;
He passeth but oo steyre in dayes two,
But ner the les, for al his hevy armure,
He foloweth hir that is his lyves cure;
for whos departing he took gretter yre
Thanne for al his brenning in the fyre.